

MYENNIS OCTOPUNCTATA COQ. (DIPTERA: OTITIDAE), A MODERN RECORD

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As far as I am aware, *Myennis octopunctata* appears to have been last recorded in Britain in 1964 (Allen, 1967) from a site in NW Kent. Previously, it had been recorded on two occasions on Mitcham Common, Surrey in 1950 and 1951 (Parmenter 1950, 1952) and is known from older records from Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. It is therefore pleasing to report that this species remains established on Mitcham Common.

During the gales in the autumn of 1989, a moribund white poplar on Mitcham Common was blown down. The upper branches were cut up and disposed of in a sunny location some distance from the trunk a few days later. Much of this timber had extensive heart rot but the bark was sound. My interest was first alerted to this deadwood pile by the presence of megachilid bees nesting in large beetle borings and resulted in a series of visits. During a visit on 18 June (1990), I noted a number of tephritid-like flies engaged in wing flapping similar to that of the Tephritidae. A specimen from this initial encounter proved to be *M. octopunctata* (Plate IV, Figure 1). Further visits revealed the presence of as many as half a dozen individuals at any one time. The fly was observed until 29 July when the last individuals were seen (two females).

In addition to this population, I was able to establish that there was a further population on the original trunk and another on a lombardy poplar that had fallen in the gale of 1987. The latter trunk had remained alive for at least a year after its demise and there are now new suckers arising from the broken roots. However, much of the bark has now gone and it must surely be only a matter of time before this trunk is unsuitable for *M. octopunctata*.

Most of the evidence indicates an association with white poplar (Allen, 1967). This argument is supported by my experience although it would appear that a range of poplar species may be involved. Parmenter (1950) comments that in all of the instances that he encountered *M. octopunctata*, it appeared to be restricted to the lowest 6 feet or so of the trunk. If as one might assume, the specimens that I encountered came from the crown of a tree some 20 feet high, it would appear that the position in the tree is not important.

Allen (1967) comments that he never found any specimens at rest and that the species appeared "out of the blue". For some time, I too could not find individuals at rest but eventually found that they secreted themselves in the grooves between ridges in the bark. In this position they were well camouflaged by the banded pattern on their wings.

Myennis octopunctata is listed as Red Data Book 2 in Shirt (1987). Given the current known distribution, it would seem that Mitcham Common may be the stronghold for this species. However, poplars are a popular suburban tree and it is surprising that this fly is so little known.

I am most grateful to the warden Mr M. Boyle for permission to record invertebrates from this site.

REFERENCES

- Allen, A. A. 1967. *Myennis octopunctata* Coq. (Dipt., Otitidae) and other notable insects in suburban NW Kent. *Ent. Mon. Mag.* 103: 34-35.
Parmenter, L. 1950. *Myennis octopunctata* Coq. (Dipt. Otitidae) in Surrey. *Ent. Mon. Mag.* 86: 256.

Parmenter, L. 1952. Further records of *Doros conopseus* F. (Dipt. Syrphidae) and *Myennis octopunctata* Coq. (Dipt. Otitidae) in Surrey. *Ent. Mon. Mag.* 88: 13.
 Shirt, D. B. 1987. *British red data books 2. Insects*. The Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough.

SHORT COMMUNICATION

Hunting wasps disputing over female.—On 30.vi.1990, I visited the Navette Valley south of La Chapelle en Valgaudemar in the Parc National des Ecrins in the French Alps. The Navette Valley is a hanging valley with many alpine meadows higher up, but with patches of birch scrub at lower levels where fluvial erosion has revealed the underlying bouldery morainic material. Amongst these I took several photographs of three sand wasps, possibly *Ammophila sabulosa* (L.), locked together at their heads. In successive exposures, between which the group flew a few feet, the upper wasps, presumably males, were seen to have their abdomens crossed as if in dispute (Plate IV, Figure 2). After half a dozen shots I lost sight of them on the bouldery ground.—N. A. Callow, 25 Cranes Park Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey KT5 8BS.

EDITORIAL

Over the past few years, several people have suggested how worthwhile it would be to have colour plates illustrated by photographs of living insects rather than set specimens. This has at last proved possible, and the two colour plates in this issue (Plates III and IV) are the result.

Together with Plates I and II, which illustrate specimens exhibited at the 1990 Annual Exhibition, the cost has been met by a grant from the Hammond and Crow Memorial Fund.

It is envisaged that future volumes of the *Journal* will continue to contain two colour plates from the Annual Exhibition together with two colour plates from photographs of living insects. Contributors who feel that they have high quality photographs showing particularly interesting aspects of insect behaviour are invited to submit them for publication together with a suitable article or short communication.

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PLATE IV.

1. *Myennis octopunctata* Coq. (Diptera: Otitidae), a modern record. R. K. A. Morris. 1991. *Br. J. Ent. Nat. Hist.* 4: 95. A female *Myennis octopunctata* performing wing-waving display on poplar bark, 11.vii.90. Photograph by I. F. G. McLean, Pentax MX, 100mm f4 Takumar macro lens set at f32, extension tube and bellows, Olympus T28 twin-head macro flash, Agfa CT100 colour reversal film.

2. Hunting wasps disputing over female. N. A. Callow. 1991. *Br. J. Ent. Nat. Hist.* 4: 96. Two males(?) disputing over female of sand wasp, possibly *Ammophila sabulosa* (L.). Pentax LX, 50mm macro lens, 32mm extension tubes, Pentax electronic flash.

3-4. Notes on the butterflies of Östergötland, Sweden. I. Krusys. 1991. *Br. J. Ent. Nat. Hist.* 4: 77-82. *L. achine* male (3) and female (4).